



Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc.

<u>Subject: Fee Waiver Policy for School Readiness</u>		
<u>Policy #: 404.4</u> ELCSWF-SR0010A-25	<u>Category:</u> Child Eligibility	<u>Reference #</u> DEL-SR-404
<u>Approval:</u> June 25, 2025 (pending)	<u>Effective Date:</u> July 1, 2025	<u>Replaces (policy # and date):</u> ELCSWF-SR0010-05 4/21/05 ELCSWF-SR0010A-06 (5/06) Sept. 26, 2008 ELCSWF-SR0010A-14 September 15, 2023

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida (ELC) will follow when applying a waiver or temporary reduction of required parent copayments for families participating in the School Readiness (SR) program. This ensures equitable access to services when families experience qualifying circumstances that limit their ability to pay.

Policy Statement:

The ELC may waive or temporarily reduce parent copayments under the following conditions and according to the procedures described in this policy. All waivers are applied on a case-by-case basis and are subject to documentation and approval requirements.

Board-approved special circumstances for Fee Waiver and Co-payment for Foster Parents:

- The Coalition may temporarily waive the copayment for a child whose family experiences:
 - A natural disaster.
 - An event that limits the parents' ability to pay.
 - Parent(s) are in prison or incarcerated.
 - Parent(s) are in a residential treatment facility
 - Parent(s) are unemployed (fee waived for no more than 90 days)
 - Parent(s) are unable to work due to illness or incapacitation

- Parent(s) experience an emergency such as a household fire or burglary, or are homeless
- Parents who experienced a natural disaster (i.e., hurricane, fire, etc.)
- Parents who are participating in required parenting classes, the Child is participating in the Early Head Start or Head Start Program,
- Others as determined by the CEO.
- Fees for licensed foster parents may be waived, provided the child's parents meet the criteria above. The information must be documented on the foster parent waiver form (attached) and placed in the eligibility file.
- The fee reduction is limited to the period during which the parent is unable to make the required payment. The Coalition will assign a beginning and end date for when the co-payment will be resumed.
- A waiver reduction must be requested in writing to the Coalition.

Procedures:

- Families may request a fee waiver or reduction by submitting a written request and supporting documentation to the ELC or its designated eligibility contractor.
- The ELC will review each request to determine eligibility for waiver/reduction. The CEO or designated authority will make the final determination.
- Documentation supporting the qualifying event or program participation must be maintained in the family's case file.
- The fee waiver or reduction will be granted for a defined period based on the family's circumstances and documentation provided. A start and end date will be documented in the case file. The ELC will conduct a review prior to the end date to determine if an extension is warranted.
- Families will receive written notification of the approval or denial of their request, including the effective dates of any waiver or reduction.
- The ELC's Fee Waiver Policy will be submitted as part of the Coalition's SR Plan and posted to the Coalition's website per applicable requirements.

I EXHIBITS:

Sliding fee schedule (most recently adopted)